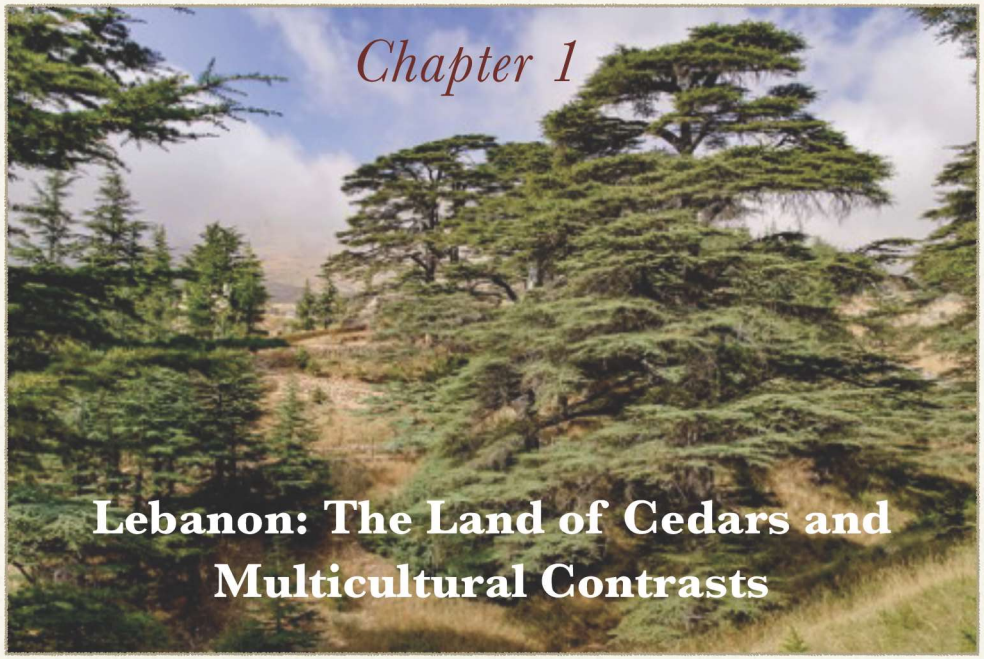
THE MOSAIC OF CONTEMPERORY CULTURES OF THE ARABIC SPEAKING COUNTRIES



Pre-Reading Self Assessment

Question 1 of 10

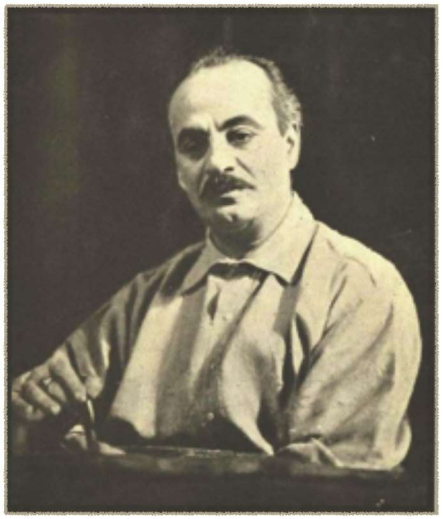
In Labanon it is against the law to mary an immediate relative.

- **A.** True
- **B.** False

◀ Check Answer ▶

You have your Lebanon and I have mine

"You have your Lebanon with its dilemma. I have my Lebanon with its beauty. You have your Lebanon with all the conflicts that rage there. I have my Lebanon with the dreams that live there. Your Lebanon is a political knot which the years attempt to unite. My Lebanon is made up of hills which rise with great presence and magnificence towards the azure sky. Your Lebanon is an international problem beset with the shadows of night. My Lebanon is made up of silent and mysterious valleys whose slopes gather together the sound of bells and the trickling of streams. Your Lebanon is a tilting ground where men from the West struggle with others from the South…. Your Lebanon is an octopus-government with numerous tentacles…. Your Lebanon is a ruse devised by the fox when he encounters the hyena in the latter plots against the wolf. My Lebanon is made up of memories which recall to me the humming young girls on nights of the full moon, and the songs of little girls between the threshing floor and the wine press. Your Lebanon is a chess board set between a religious leader and a military leader. My Lebanon is a temple…Your Lebanon is one man who pays tribute and another who collects taxes….Your Lebanon lives on ships and trade…. Your Lebanon is made up of clerks, workers and directors….Your Lebanon is made up of delegations and committees… Your Lebanon is a country of speeches and disputes…made up of laws and clauses on paper, treaties and pacts in registers. Your Lebanon sometimes detaches itself from Syria sometimes attaches itself again; it cheats on both sides and finishes between the two of them…



Stop for a moment and open your eyes wide so that I can unveil to you the reality of the children of my Lebanon. They are those tillers of the soil…shepherds… winegrowers…poets….They are those who leave the Lebanon in their destitute state, they have only fire in their hearts and strength in their arms. And when they return their hands are brimming with the riches of the earth and their hands are crowned with laurel...

As for me I am convinced about my Lebanon and its children, and in my conviction there reign freshness, silence and tranquility." (Gibran Khalil Gibran, 1920)

COUNTRY PROFILE

- *Name: Lebanon*
- *Capital: Beirut*
- *Area: 10,452 sq km (4,036 sq miles)*
- *Population: about 4 million Lebanese and 2 million refugee and migrant worker*
- *Language: Arabic (French and English are widely used)*
- *Major Religions: Christians, Muslims and Druze*
- *Climate: Mediterranean moderate climate*
- *Geography: Coastal, mountains and valleys*

No other words can capture Lebanese culture, and Lebanon as a country, more eloquently than the above quote which Gibran Khalil Gibran wrote about a century before we embarked on writing this chapter. Lebanon was until the mid 1970s known as "Switzerland of the East" and its capital, Beirut, known as "Paris of the Middle East". When Lebanon is mentioned, other Arabs and Europeans would think of modernity, fashion, style, shopping, education, publishing houses, liberal media, religious and political freedom and diversity, nightlife, music, outdoor activities and many other fascinating characteristics. Unfortunately, bombs, explosions, war and political tension would come to mind too. The Lebanese cultural and political structure is a mixture of conflicting polar opposites that sometimes and somehow meet and flourish side by side. It is a jumble of contrasting beauty and ugliness, tolerance and bigotry, acceptance and disapproval, peace and conflict. In this chapter, we attempt to draw an outline of the Lebanese culture, a pluralistic contrast that is hard for anyone who gets to know it not to fall in love with it, yet at the same time despise some of its realities. To help you better understand the culture/s of Lebanon, we will address some of the different aspects that make it up and influence it. Surely, each of the discussed themes by itself could be the subject of an entire

Government Profile

- The Republic of Lebanon is a Parliamentary democracy
- The State is headed by the President of the Republic and the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The president should be a Maronite Christian
- Legislative power rests with the Chamber of Deputies (Parliament), which consists of 128 deputies who are elected directly by the people for a four-year term. Head of the Parliament is a Shia Muslim
- Executive power is entrusted to the Council of Ministers headed by a Prime Minster who should be a Sunni Muslim.
- Judicial power rests with judicial courts of different degrees and levels of jurisdiction.
- Lebanon has a free economy system that guarantees entrepreneurship and private property.

Information is from the Presidency of the Lebanese Republic official webpage with some authors' edits.
https://www.presidency.gov.lb/English/LebaneseSystem/Pages/

book; however, we follow the Lebanese phrase, *Moukhtasar Moufid* (short and sweet) of which we hope you, the reader, would continue to explore through the other resources provided in this book and, better yet, through direct interaction and engaging conversations with others about the Lebanese cultures.

Religion

Lebanese people, historically, pride themselves of their culture of religious diversity. In 2012, when Pope Benedict visited Lebanon, he urged that multi-faith Lebanon be a model of peace and religious coexistence in the Middle East (Reuters[2], NBCNews[3], Lebanese National News Agency[4]). Such expressions have been voiced by different Lebanese and Arab Muslim and Christian religious leaders over the years. Since its formation, Lebanon has been a place where people of different faiths existed. The pluralistic religious culture in Lebanon includes many more than the twenty (20) religious groups that are officially recognized by the government; the officially recognized groups include 14 Christian groups, 4 Muslim dominations, Druze and Judaism [16]. In addition, there are almost as many unrecognized groups. Recognized denominations have representation in the government and have quota-based share and representation not only in the parliament and cabinet but also in government and upper-level civil service jobs. This delicate balance and sensitivity to religious groups has always been one of the country's pride legacies. However, recent religious tensions, shifting of political and regional alliances, and the permanent migration of certain religious groups out of Lebanon, has made some members of the dominant religious, the Shi'ite Muslim, question the legitimacy of this delicate balance, as it calls for the cancellation of this legacy (which was inherited from the French Mandate of Lebanon 1923-1943) in favor of a system that is solely based on people's vote.

THE RECOGNIZED RELIGIOUS DOMINATIONS IN LEBANON
Christian dominations: Maronite; Roman Orthodox; Roman Catholics, Armenian Orthodox; Armenian Catholics ; Copts, Protestants, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholics, Assyrians, Chaldean Catholics, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Presbyterians, Baptists and Seventh day Adventists.
Muslim dominations: Sunni, Shia, Alawite, Ismaili
Druze
Jewish

Because of the distribution of authority among the different recognized religious groups, and to keep the existing "balance" of political power and representation, there has been no official census in Lebanon since 1932. Current statistics differ slightly between one source and another. All sources agree that currently the Muslim population is estimated to be about 60% of the population with the majorities being Suuni and Shia Muslims, about 35% of the population are Christians and about 5% are Druz. The reported number of Jews who remain in the country varies and ranges between 296 to less than 1007 people. Nevertheless, some synagogues still exist in Lebanon, the most known of those is Beirut's Maghen Abraham Synagogue which was restored in 2020.

The unrecognized religious groups enjoy relative freedom in exercising their faith as the Lebanese constitution guarantees, in principle, the freedom of religious practice and the "absolute freedom of conscience". However, such freedom fluctuates and at times is subject pressures from religious leaders who initiate pressure on the secular authorities to use the Internal Lebanese Forces and Lebanese Armed Forces to detain or limit such freedoms [4 & 5] because they disagree with the beliefs and practices of minority religious groups or feel that they pose a threat to their prominent religious authority. Minority religious groups resort to either going through the dominant groups to get some civil services performed, such as regis-

SOME OF THE ACTIVE BUT UNRECOGNIZED RELIGIOUS DOMINATIONS IN LEBANON
Bahá'i Buddhists Hindus Jehovah's Witnesses Mormons Yezidis Zoroastrians

tering their marriage, or being forced to have their marriages done in civil courts outside the country then get the marriage registered in Lebanon. However, even in such cases the individuals would be registered under the officially recognized dominations.

The cultural paradox when it comes to religion is evident in the fact that, in general, the Lebanese society is mostly secular[6] but at the same time it is religiously driven. It is very common in some areas in Lebanon to see a mosque across a Church. This serves as a visual marker of the religious makeup of the population in that neighborhood, village, or vicinity as the presence of places of worship of different religions and denominations visually promotes the idea of coexistence, tolerance and acceptance. However, it is also common to be in certain areas, villages, or neighborhoods that are exclusivly made up of one religious or secterian background. While there are areas that have been historically populated by people of a certain religious background, sectarian demographic segregation occurred during the 15 year civil war and continues till now.

Adding to the cultural religious paradox is the fact that people in Lebanon are free to choose to change their religious affiliation and convert from one religion to another or change sects within their religious affiliation without any civil consequences. Some Lebanese choose to declare such changes in the civil records, that is if the conversion is within the officially recognized religions, while others would not do so especially if the conversion is to one of the unrecognized religious groups. Reasons for conversion differ, some are belief and conviction based while others are simply to take advantage of the different laws governing issues such as marriage, divorce and inheritance. While individuals who convert do not face huge social retributions, family acceptance varies from accepting the person to disowning them.

Gallery 1.1 Churches and Mosques

Mosque & church in the background in Beirut

Nevertheless, religious diversity has been historically a cause of conflicts, tensions and civil unrest. Some examples of such periods are the sectarian conflicts between the Maronites and Druz in 1860 and then in the 80s of the 20th Century. Over the years, there have been many inter-sect armed conflicts because of difference in political affiliations or views. Yet, many in Lebanon admit that the Civil War was not caused by religious differences but rather because of differences in political ideologies which, at times, used religion as fuel for the conflict. The late liberal journalist and diplomat Gahassan Tueni is known to have once said, it was "the war of others on our land"[7].

Language

Hi! keyfik ca va? (Hi! How are you, OK!) is a commonly heard phrase used in Lebanon where three different languages, English, Arabic and French are integrated to make one sentence, a question. This is not new to Lebanon though. Even more than 40 years ago Lebanese people used sentences that integrated the three mentioned languages. For example, when they used to ask a waiter for their bill, they would say something like, *garcon* (French for waiter), *alfatoura* (Arabic for bill) *please* (English). What seems to have changed is simply the order of the French and English words which suggest a linguistic-power transformation that is a reflection of the political influence in the region and the English's new preponderance in many cultures, including Lebanon which is part of the traditional Francophone cultures.

Using mixed languages in everyday life is very common even among the less educated. Using foreign language words in one's speech is considered chic, trendy and a form of modernity. This trend has been increasing to a level where in 2010 Beirut witnessed an organized campaign to revive Arabic language1 among Lebanese youth. Then, France 24 The Observers media outlet reported that no Lebanese send their CVs in Arabic[8].

Arabic is the official language of Lebanon with most official documents available in Modern Standard Arabic and in French. The existence of official documents in French is a residual of the mandate period. Modern standard Arabic is only used in textbooks, written documents, newspapers, magazines, and news casts. However, even newscasts and written texts have been infiltrated by foreign words that are Arabized and with colloquial Lebanese. The spoken Arabic that people use is Lebanese colloquial which has many dialects. Some dialects are associated with geographic areas, others with religious groups and yet others with social class. These Arabic dialects of Lebanon have adopted grammar and phonetics from the languages that preceded Arabic in that area such as Aramaic, Syriac in addition to Turkish which came later.

Fun Facts about Lebanon

1. Lebanon is mentioned in the Bible 55 times.
2. Cedars of Lebanon are mentioned in the Bible 42 times.
3. Tyre (a city in south Lebanon) is mentioned in the Bible 53 times.
4. Sidon (aka Sayda- a city is South Lebanon) is mentioned 34 times in the Bible.
5. Tyrian Purple (aka purple-blue and Indigo) came from the shores of Lebanon; it is a natural fabric dye that is extracted from the Murex shell and was used by the Phoenicians around 1200 BCE.
6. The Lebanese coastline is about 225 km (150 miles) in length. Traffic aside, one can drive all around the country's border lines in less than 8 hours.
7. Arabic, English and French are commonly spoked with people sometimes using three languages in a three-word sentence (e.g Hi, keyfik ca va?).
8. There are 47 towns in the U.S. named Lebanon.

In addition to Arabic, English and French, languages that are used in Lebanon include Armenian, Kurdish, Latin, and Syriac. Latin and Syriac are still used in sermons of some Christian churches. Languages used by migrant workers (such as Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Fula from West African workers; Sinhala and Tamil from Sri Lanka; Amharic and Oromo from Ethiopia; Filipino from the Philippines, and Bengali from Bangladesh) are also common to a lesser degree and surely are less prestigious than the other Western languages.

Most communication among people starts with lengthy, and sometimes redundant, questions about one's health, family, work, and news before any other topic is brought up. People usually feel free to voice their opinions about different matters, even when not directly asked. Unlike the West, religion and politics are among the most discussed topics and hardly a taboo.

Proverbs and Idioms

Ma fi she almathal ma qalou is a phrase that many Lebanese, especially older ones, say. This phrase means when translated "there is nothing that was not expressed by an idiom/proverb". This phrase does not only add authenticity and empowers quoting proverbs but also reflects the fact that proverbs and idioms are windows into the stored and accumulated past experiences of people. Proverbs and idioms also recreate and reinforce patterns of thinking and behavior that are socially expected and accepted. Lebanese people use proverbs and idioms in their daily communication. Such idioms and proverbs are also commonly used in songs and titles of TV shows. While some proverbs and idioms are universal and have equivalents in many languages and cultures, some are unique to particular cultures and groups; thus, not all proverbs would make sense when translated to someone who does not understand the language. This is the case with many Lebanese proverbs that may not make much sense to someone who is not proficient in the language or is not aware of some of the Lebanese cultural constituents. Some of the proverbs used in Lebanon reflect even the sectarian and religious tension that exist among people in Lebanon.

Collecting and archiving this form of pop-literature was the lifework of the late Lebanese author Salam Arrasi (1911-2003) who collected and traced back the stories behind some of the most popular Lebanese proverbs and documented those in multiple of his books. Many others also published books focusing on popular proverbs. Among those is the work that Caroline Torbey Lebanese proverbs inspired children's book "Dessine moi un proverbe"[9] published in French in 2018. In her illustrated book, illustrations by Renee Thomas, Tarabay introduces children to different Lebanese villages where her proverb-inspired story unfolds introducing children not only to some common proverbs but also to Lebanon's geography. Other published books on proverbs include Yacoub's Lebanese Folk Proverbs [10] (1987 in Arabic), and Dalal's Mitlo Matayel[11] (2020, in Arabic) which combined a collection of Lebanese proverbs with digitally produced graphics and pictures. Family and Relationships

The family remains the nucleous of teh Lebanese cultural structure, an aspect that Lebanon shares with the rest of the Southwest Asian and North African Arab countries. The family in Lebanon is a miniature model of the larger cultural constituents with all of its complexities and contradictions. Probably the Lebanese idiom *Ana wa akhi aa ibn aamy, wa anna wa ibn aamy aalghareeb*, (me and my brother against my cousin and my cousin and I against the stranger) is an accurate portrayal of the family ties and relationships in Lebanon.

The size of a Lebanese family differs widely based on multiple factors, including but not limited to social class, geographic location, religious affiliation and educational level. Traditionally, immediate family size used to be relatively large when compared to Western-family size, however in the last 40 years, conditions have changed, and many families started to limit their size to having two or three children. Nevertheless, having children is not only socially expected but also is the reason and stabilizing factor of many tumultuous marriages. According to The Labour Force and Household Living Conditions Survey (LFHLCS)[1] 2018-2019, family size in Lebanon averaged at 4 persons. Historically, Northern and Southern Lebanon in addition to the Beqaa valley had larger family sizes then the rest of the country. Today, this holds true as these areas average higher than the national average with some exceptions such as Jezzine, an area in Southern Lebanon, where the average family size is 3 persons. The same report indicates that 82% of the families are headed by males while 18% are headed by females.

Facts about Lebanon

- The area of Lebanon (10,452 square km, about 4035 square miles) is smaller than the state of Connecticut in the U.S.A.
- There are 18 officially recognized religious groups and sects in Lebanon and a number of unrecognized religious groups practicing in Lebanon.
- In 2005, following the assassination of prime minister Rafiq Al Hariri, the major political parties/players in Lebanon were divided between became known as March 8 and March 14 forces.
- Qurnat Al Sawda in the north of Lebanon is the highest mountain peak in the country and is 3,088 meters (10,131 feet) above sea level.
- According to the UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency there are an estimated 180,000 Palestinian, Muslim and Christian, refugees in Lebanon living in 12 camps in different areas.
- More than 1.5 million Syrian and Iraqi refugees live in Lebanon.

Dating and Marriage

In the Lebanese culture, marriage is not simply a civil contract between two persons of the opposite sex. It is a social construct between two families. Marriage is also a contract between the spouses and the religious institution in addition to the secular one. When two individuals want to get married, in general, there are some traditional rituals that are followed. Usually, the groom's parents will officially ask for the hand of the bride-to-be from her parents even if the two individuals and their families were already in agreement. The proposal for engagement usually takes place at the girl's parents' house and is rarely a surprise to any of the involved parties. After the ritual of proposing a formal engagement party is traditionaly held and people are invited just as they are to weddings. Such practice may differ from one case to another and would depend on the family's economic class. Engagement parties range between extravagant to limited to the asking-for-hand visit. In recent years, Western style proposals have been introduced and practiced by some. Engagement length differs from a short period to a few years depending on the circumstances of those involved and their families. The engagement is the formal-public declaration of the relationship between the two involved individuals which allows them to be frequently together in public. Unlike the U.S. where the wedding expenses are traditionally borne on the bride and her family or split among the couple-to-be-wed, in Lebanon, usually, the groom or his family are financially responsible for the expenses of the wedding party. Lebanese wedding parties also range between those that cost millions of dollars (such as that of Elie Saab, the Lebanese fashion designer, son's wedding in 2019 and that of Lebanon's Central Bank son's wedding in 2019 which was held in Paris, France with a reported cost of 5 million dollars) and those that will be limited to a simple and modest celebration. Engagement and wedding are usually mixed-gender celebrations, however, among a minority of Lebanese Muslim families, such parties are held separately for males and females. Music, dancing and food are common across the country however the presence of alcohol differs from one family to another even among the Muslim populatioAll marriages inside Lebanon, and sometimes engagement among Muslim population, is handled by the religious institutions of the faith of the individuals involved. No civil marriage

is available as a choice inside of Lebanon; however, civil marriage is acknowledged and can be registered in the civil records if it is officiated outside of Lebanon. Despite multiple attempts by the civil activists in the 1990s and then in 2014-2015 for allowing civil marriage to be legalized in Lebanon, religious authorities opposed the movement and no legislator pushed for it although many verbally supported this right[4]. This is why many Lebanese couples who choose to have a civil marriage, for a variety of reasons, usually would go to either nearby Cyprus or Turkey to have their marriage handled by a civil authority rather than a religious one. It is much easier for individuals of different sects within a religion (e.g. Sunni Muslim to marry a Shia Muslim or a Greek Orthodox to marry a Maronite) then it is for people to marry a partner of a different sect outside their religious affiliation. However, since Islamic law allows a Muslim male to marry a Christian or Jewish woman (but not vice versa), the contract can be easily registered in the Islamic court in Lebanon. Marriage among people of different religious affiliations exists and is socially accepted in Lebanon. However, such acceptance also differs from one family and even area to another. In some cases, the families require that the potential spouse changes their religious affiliation even if it was just at face value in the civic records, while others choose to go the civil marriage route.

Marrying a relative, even a first cousin, is acceptable, lawful and is still commonly practiced among Lebanese despite their religious, social and ethnic backgrounds. It is possible that this practice originated from the wish of families to preserve inheritance within the family and the social ties that it fosters. However, as more awareness is spreading about the potential effect of close-blood marriages on children, more people are obliging to the recommended blood tests before getting married.

Same Sex Marriage. Although same sex marriage in Lebanon is not legally permitted, there is a visible LGBTQA+ community present with a relatively wide range of freedom of expression and practice. Multiple organizations represent the community and *Helem* (Arabic for dream) is the first and oldest organization to advocate for the group. Nevertheless, same sex relationships are socially and religiously frowned upon. Cohabitation also exists especially in urban areas but is also socially frowned upon and religiously disapproved but sometimes overlooked depending on the social status of the involved individuals. More recently, some judges are liberally interpreting article 534 of the Lebanese law and are supporting same sex relationships Article 534 criminalizes sexual acts contradictory to the 'laws of nature'.[13 &14]

Dating

Dating before engagement became an accepted practice in Lebanon. While the practice was a foreign concept to older generations, today having a girlfriend and a boyfriend is common to many Lebanese of different faiths especially in urban areas. It is common to hear teenagers publicly talking about their boyfriends or girlfriends. The social acceptance of dating varies from one family to another, despite the religious background, and from one area to another.

Polygyny, the practice of a male having more than one wife, while permissible among Lebanese Muslims and permitted by the Lebanese civic law for Muslims, is rarely practiced in Lebanon. Only a small percentage of Lebanese Muslim men have more than one wife at a time.

Arranged Marriages. Many in the West think that arranged marriages are the norm in Arab countries. While arranged marriages, where the bride and groom have no say in the matter, do occur in some parts of the Arab countries, they are rare in Lebanon. Marriages are either based on love, mutual consent, reasonable thinking and convenience or a combination of those factors.

Divorce. Divorce is handled by the same religious courts that handle marriages. A 2015 Human Right Watch report indicated that there are 15 separate personal status laws for the different recognized sects[3]. *Alakhbar* newspaper (in Arabic) reported in December 2018 that the divorce rate in Lebanon increased more than 100% between 2006 and 2017 attributing that to factors that include women becoming more economically productive and a shift away from the patriarchal male-dominant society. The report noted that 65% of divorce is concentrated in the provinces with greater economic stress. However, in 2021 Information International[8] reported a decline in divorce rates of 11.1% in 2020 compared to 2019 and a decline of 9.8 percent when compared to that of the average rate of 2015-2019. The higher divorce rates are recorded

among the Lebanese Muslim community due to the ease of divorce compared to that with the Christian population among which divorce happens but is harder to obtain. These figures do not include cases of separation. Traditionally divorced women were socially stigmatized and faced harder economic times; however, this does not seem to be the case anymore especially in more urbanized areas. There is no single law that governs custody of children when they are infants. Such laws differ between one religion and another. Eventually custody goes to the father after a certain age. Among Christians, mother's custody is usually up to when the child is 2 years of age regardless of the child's sex. Among Sunni Muslims and Druze mothers, custody used to be up to 5 years of age for boys and 7 for girls however, under pressure from civil rights movements Sunni Muslim courts changed the mother's custody to be until the child reaches 12 years of age no matter their gender. Among Shia Muslims there is no set age and things are left to the discretion of the religious judge.

Child rearing. Practices of raising children are similar among Lebanese of different faith and ethnicities. Child rearing is not only a matter that the parents handle; rather, it is the extended family, and sometimes, neighbors and anyone older than the child who could be involved. It is not uncommon to see anyone telling a person younger than them what they should do and how they should behave. However, this usually follows a relationship-age hierarchy where the parents, when present, should take lead followed by the older siblings, grandparents, uncles and aunts and then neighbors and even occasionally strangers.

Caring for aging parents. Caring for one's parents is socially and culturally expected. Just as most children stay in their parent's home and do not move out despite how old they get unless they get married or if they work in an area that is relatively far from their parents' home, children are expected to care for their aging parents by providing materially and assisting physically. When it becomes difficult for the parents to care for themselves or be living independently, children are expected to move them into their own homes and care for them there. Usually caring for aging parents ends up being the responsibility of the unmarried son or daughter who gets financial support from their siblings. Yet, in other instances such responsibility becomes an issue of contention between siblings. The children socio-cultural expected responsibility of caring for their parents is one of many factors that explains the small number of nursing homes and assisted living facilities in Lebanon as compared to the more common presence of such facilities in the West. In addition, such facilities are usually very expensive for most families to afford or are admisntered by non-profit organizations, focusing on aging people who can't be cared for at home. In that case, the services and quality of care provided are minimal.While previously people used to frown on families who put their parents in nursing homes, such practice, if and when done, is more accepted these days in Lebanon than it used to be probably due to the high level of immigration of the children trying to find new job opportunities abroad and their parents' refusal or inability to travel with them.

Inheritance. Inheritance laws in Lebanon are also divided into two laws. One, the *Sharia* law (religious law), that applies to Muslims and civil law from 1959 that applies to non-Muslims. It is important to mention that if the parents have mixed-religious marraige there are certain circumstances that prevent their children from actually receiving inheritance.

Funerals and Mourning

Death, whatever its cause, unites Lebanese regardless of their sectarian affiliations. It unites them in the mourning process and how they deal sadness and loss. While the funeral and burial rituals differ from one religious group to another, they all have common practices when it comes to receiving condolences and expressing sorrow. Even expressions of condolences such as *Allah yaazeicom* (May God give you comfort), *taaazeina alhara* (our warm condolences), *Allah yerhamou/yerhamha* (May God have mercy on him/her) and *yejaal mathwah/ mathwaha aljanna* (may he/she be in paradise) are a unified across sectarian division. Surely though, there are expressions that have religious connotations which are associated with each of the religious groups.

Traditionally, people show solidarity at times of death. In general people will come together, to support the family who suffered a loss.

Depending on the area, family, religious affiliation and other factors, funerals may be mixed-gender or segregated between males and females. Women, traditionally, would dress in black and not use makeup at the funeral and would even remove any nail polish they previously had. Some men, traditionally, would not shave and allow their facial hair to grow for a a few days. Some women who lose an only adult young son, or sometimes any adult son, disregarding their religious affiliation, may choose to live the rest of their life wear-

ing black as an expression of their never ending sorrow. Crying, loud and visual expressions of mourning are not only common but were traditionally expected from the relatives and close friends of the deceased even if they were out of mere performance and not heart felt. Culturally, females are given more freedom to express their emotions especially at time of death as men are expected not to cry and to be emotionally strong. For certain religious groups, females don't go to the cemetery for burial and instead mourn at home.

Obituaries, *waraqat naawah,* would be printed and stuck around the neighborhood or village of the deceased listing the name of the deceased and their immediate and extended family and announcing the funeral arrangements. A brief obituary might be published in local newspapers. In some villages, the announcement may come from the local mosque or by ringing the church bell. Condolences would be offered at the deceased family's house and/or at the assigned location which would usually be a hall belonging to the religious place where prayers would be held. Funeral homes are not common in Lebanon. Oberving memorials after a number of days following burial (e.g. 7 days, 40 days and one year) differs widely between families and also between those of different religious affiliations just as the burial l site visitation differs. There are no public cemeteries as cemeteries are separated based on religious affiliation. If the deceased is a Muslim, usually, during the funeral Quran verses would be recited either live or from a recording. Also among some Muslims, the wife of the deceased would have to observe *aaida*, usually for a few months, during which she will not see men. The practice is to protect the women from any doubts regarding the parenthood of the child if she was recently pregnant at the time of death, and to give her time to mourn the loss privately.

However, things have been changing when it comes to performance of sadness. In an a 2019 article, Nancy Razzouq, a journalist and producer, wrote on Lebanon24 an article in Arabic which title translates to "*Today's Funerals: get together for friends…laughter and showing off*"[15]. The article contrasts what is usually expected during funerals and when someone dies with the practice she seems to notice among some families where women are dressed in latest fashions and wearing makeup while others engage in conversations, laugh loudly and take advantage of such occasions to show off. Such showing off, she mentions, involves even the family of the deceased who may show off by what food items they serve to those attending stating that what used to be known as *louqmat rahma* (a mercy bite) became a "cocktail of sweet and salty" food.

Traditionally, during funerals, people attending are offered unsweetened Turkish coffee and cigarettes for smokers. While most people stopped offering cigarettes more than 20 years ago, recent changes involve offering more than just unsweetened black coffee and include offering colorful soft drinks, in addition to tea. People continue to get together to eat with the deceased's family after the burial. It is also common for people to send floral arrangements and/or donate money during such sad occasions.

Gender Roles and Women Rights

Gender roles in the cultures of Lebanon are atypical for the Arab region, especially among families living in the urban areas. In the past 20 years there have been multiple legislative reforms that aimed to address the multifaceted complexities surrounding gender roles[9]. Despite the progress and the creation of the National Commission for Lebanese Women in 1998 and the active feminist movements and organizations in the country, gender equality remains short from ideal in many areas and there is a scarce in studies that address gender roles and equality[9].

The United Nation's women report on Arab states confirms equal enrollment of boys and girls in primary schools and reports that 83% of Lebanese women are literate2. In fact, there are many news reports that indicate that female enrollment in colleges and universities outnumber that of males. However, although it is socially accepted that females work outside their homes and participate in public service and life, women make up only 4.6% of the Parliament and their participation in the labor force is 29% compared to 72% for men[16]. Just like other patriarchal societies, the traditional gender roles continue to be dominant across the different religious groups, especially in smaller cities and villages, where gender, cultural traditions, and patriarchy are mixed with religious beliefs and play a role in the Lebanese attitudes gender role[17].

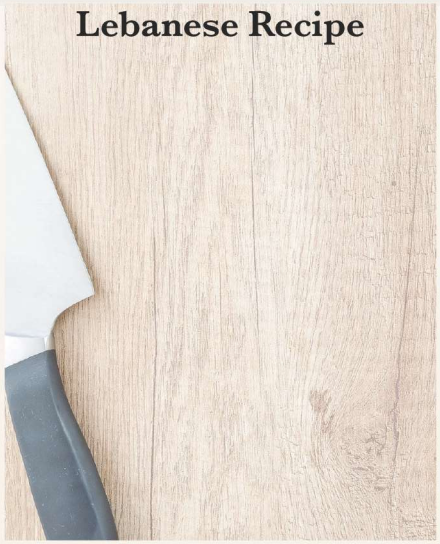
Lebanon is one of the most progressive Arabic speaking countries when it comes to women rights and freedom. The Lebanese constitution does not specifically grant equal rights for females and males; rather, it guarantees equal rights for all citizens regardless of their gender. Article 7 of the constitution states that: "All Lebanese shall be equal before the law. They shall equally enjoy civil and political rights and shall equally be bound by public obligations and duties without any distinction"[18]. Lebanese women, regardless of their religious background are also among the most liberal compared to other Arabic speaking countries. Lebanese women of all religious backgrounds are also among the most liberal compared to other Arabic speaking countries. Females enjoy a wide range of liberties and are active in the workforce, education and public life although their participation in political representation is still lower than those in Europe or the United States.

In October 2021, the Lebanese parliament failed to pass a law that gives females a quota of representation in the parliament.

Women Rights in Lebanon: Major Milestones

- Political rights and right to vote : 1953
- Equal inheritance for non-Muslims: 1959
- Freedom of travel and movement: 1974
- Canceling laws prohibiting birth control: 1983
- Granting women rights to be witnesses on real estate contracts: 1993
- Granting rights for married women to engage in business transactions without their husband's approval: 1994
- Granting female employees in diplomatic positions the right to keep their positions if they marry a non-Lebanese: 1994
- Mandatory schooling for females to at least fifth grade: 1998

Source: Habib. Women and the Lebanese Constitution.



Although the law guarantees women rights, this does not mean that all women are equal in Lebanon as such matters are dependent on social factors including the family and geographic areas. When it comes to children custody, the laws governing this area do not follow the personal status laws but rather religious courts and thus differs from one sect to another as previously discussed.

Although females enjoy such great liberties, the law still discriminates against females especially in the area of giving citizenship to their children as Lebanese women who are married to foreigners cannot pass citizenship on to neither their spouses nor to their children[19]. Females also cannot pass property to their non-Lebanese spouses or children

The lack of such rights comes mainly from the fear of Lebanese politicians from passing citizenship to Palestinian refugees. Such issues are regularly discussed in national media outlets and have attracted attention of international media and the attention of Human Rights Watch among other organizations. Other areas that are lacking behind include rights of custody and laws related to domestic violence and honor crimes.

Gastronomy

The Lebanese gastronomy offers a collection of culinary options that reflects the cultural diversity and uniqueness of Lebanon's unique cultural makeup. Being an intersection of the East and West left its own mark on the Lebanese cuisine which in general is very healthy as many other Mediterranean diets are. Some aspects, and dishes, of the food culture in Lebanon are shared with others in the region where olive oil, garlic and lemon juice are staples.

Food is not just something that Lebanese consume to sustain themselves; food is an expression of love; it is an art, a communal and spiritual experience[20], a show of hospitality and sometimes a display of wealth and social class. It is also a matter of national pride as the "tabbouleh and hummus war" between Lebanon and Israel suggests [21 & 22].

There is no cultural, religious, or personal occasion that does not involve food. During happy and sad occasions food is offered. For example, when a child is born there are dishes that are offered to guests; in weddings, and even funerals, sharing of food or even a cup of bitter coffee at funerals, is a must. During celebrations, Christian and Muslim holidays, certain food or desert is made, some are available year-round, others are made and available just during the holiday period. For example, during Ramadan, the Muslims fasting month, Kallaj, a cream filled pastry is made in most bakeries and pastry shops around the country disregarding the religion of the owners or the religion of the area residents. During the Muslim Eid (holiday), two major ones, and Easter the same sweet, *Maamoul*, a cookie like pastry stuffed with dates, pistachios or walnuts is a commonly offered *diafa* (hospitality) to visitors.

Alcohol is freely available, made and consumed in Lebanon. Even some Muslims consume alcohol, some in public and others in the privacy of their homes. However, one may not find alcohol stores in some conservative Muslim neighborhoods.

When Lebanese people go to restaurants, they do not just go to eat, they go to associate, spend time and even be entertained; they would usually be there for hours. Meals are multi-course that usually starts with mazza (an arrangement of finger food, dips, and salad similar to French aperitif or hors d'oeurve) followed by one, or more, main dish and concluded with an assortment of desert, fruits and coffee or tea.Fast food places (e.g. falafal, hamburger, cheeseburger, hot dog…) are usually cheaper than sit down restaurants and offer great food experiences with options that would satisfy vegans, vegetarians and meat lovers.

We provide two original authentic recipes in this chapter for our readers to try, especially if they have never tried Lebanese food, one is vegetarian, vegan and gluten free and the other is for those who crave meat proteins.

Educational System

The educational system in Lebanon is pluralistic and reflects the cultural diversity in the country in addition to the various cultural and political influences on its history. Lebanese pride themselves that one of the first World universities of law was established by the Romans in Beirut around the 3rd century after Christ which gave Beirut the nae "Mother of Laws". Since then, other foreign influences left its marks on the Lebanese educational system. French and American missionary schools and universities, such as the American University of Beirut and Saint Joseph University, both are still open, were established in Lebanon during the second half of the 19th century. The French mandate over Lebanon made French an official language in the country and modeled the Lebanese educational system after the French one. The country's independence and Arab nationalists reclaimed Arabic as the official language of the country and placed Arabic language in the curriculum alongside French and later English. Armenians also established their own schools and university. Lebanese students start learning French or English alongside Arabic in kindergarten and most students learn or at least are exposed at school to a third language in their intermediate educational level ((6th grade to 9th grade)). Private schools (k-12) outnumber public schools, in number and in the quality of teaching, as public education suffered during the years of the civil war and have faced many challenges in its attempts to rebound due to the continuous challenges and crises in the country. Public schools are free of charge while the fees at private schools vary greatly. Subjects such as Chemistry, Physics and math are always taught in English or French.

All schools follow a government set Lebanese curriculum that was revised in 2011. However, a Lebanese or non-Lebanese student who studied abroad or is a holder of a passport of another country[23] may elect to enroll in a French or International baccalaureate curriculum which is offered by several schools. The Lebanese law, mandated in 2011, dictate that education is mandatory, and should be available for free at public schools, for all children 6 to15 years of age. Elementary education consists of 5 years (grades 1-5), following one or two years of kindergarten, and is followed by 4 years of Intermediate educational level followed by 3 years of secondary levels. Vocational and technical schooling options are available for students. However, usually such options are stigmatized as options for "lazy students".

Hospitality and Social Visits

When you visit someone or receive a visitor, it is customary to be invited into one's house rather than talk at the door. After visitors sit down, usually the host will either ask them what they would like to drink (e.g. coffee, tea, juice or soft drinks) or simply ask their preference how they like their coffee, sweetened or black. Guests are expected to refuse the first offer and the host would insist and offer a second time where the guest may also politely reject the offer so the host would offer a third time and by this time the guest states their preference or

simply say "whatever you are having". When possible and available the host generally brings something with the drink such as cookies, cake, pastry…. Arabic (aka Turkish) coffee or tea are the main hot hospitality drinks offered to guests that are sometimes offered and served even after providing a cold glass of juice or soft drink. Coffee is usually the last thing to serve to guests. Chocolate or candy are also typically offered to the guests as well after the drink, when this is offered guests are asked to take one if they can not eat it immediately. If the guests have children and are relatively close to the host, the host generally sends a piece of candy to each of the guest's children.

Social life is of paramount importance in the life of Lebanese people no matter their background. In fact, the proverb *aljaneh min ghair nass ma btindass*, (paradise without people is not desirable/is not a place to step into) summarizes the social life motto in Lebanon. In certain circles, it is still acceptable for guests to arrive at any time unannounced and the one being visited would receive them with no reservations and even if the hosts were already out of their house, it is not uncommon for them to return home and receive the guests. Few are the exceptions under such circumstances when the one being visited would accept the guests "go on on your way, we will come back another time". Such circumstances could be when they are on their way to a medical appointment or another social event they were invited to. While prearranged visits or visits by appointment are welcomed they are not expected. When a visit is pre-arranged the host finds themselves under a bigger hospitality obligation beyond a cup of coffee and a cookie. When a visit is prearranged, the guest also may bring gift, flowers or a plant to their host. Edible gifts such as chocolate, candy, sweet pastries, and cake are very common.

Holidays and Celebrations

Holidays are occasions for celebrations, intra and inter-religious social connections, outings, and commercial activity in Lebanon. Holidays, religious and/or secular mean days off work for most employees disregarding their religious affiliations. Certain holidays, known also as Bank holidays, are officially recognized holidays with mandated closing for all government offices and most businesses (see table). There are also a number of celebrations and holidays where people practice certain rituals which may be different from one religious group to another.

During the major holidays, people visit each other, make special food items, buy new cloth for children...etc. In recent years, religious holidays, such as Christmas and Ramadan became cross-religious holidays, or secular holidays with religious background, where it is common to see Christmas trees in the streets of Muslim majority areas and even inside houses of non-Christians. It is also common see Ramadan ornaments in Christian majority areas and it is also common for non-Muslims to hold Iftar (fast breaking) parties during Ramadan for their Muslim and non-Muslim friends and acquaintances. Most holidays, official and unofficial, are celebrated with music, parties at homes and restaurants and could be occasions that leave a financial burden on middle-class Lebanese.

In addition to the celebratory festivities, there are also days where certain sects commemorate certain days and events that have special meanings to them such as Ashoura among Shia Muslims. Other holidays such as Valentine, Mother's Day and Halloween among others are also celebrated by many.

When Invited to a Meal

When invited to someone's house for a meal, asking "what would you like us to bring" will usually have one answer, "nothing". However, that does not mean that the guest will come empty handed. Usually, they will either take food of their choice or will bring dessert, chocolate, flowers or a combination of these. Guests do not take back with them any leftovers of what they brought with them, although they usually will either take back their dish or tray clean when they leave or it is returned to them later. Everything brought to the house of the host usually remains there.

Because food is an expression of love, when eating at someone's house, or even invited to a restaurant, expect that second and third helpings from your host as soon as your plate is empty, even if you feel full or say no. Saying "for my sake" would oblige others to accept even a small portion of what is being served.

When someone is invited to a restaurant, the inviting party takes care of paying the bill. Sometimes you would see friends rushing to pay first. Seeing what would look like a fight over who pays the check, each insisting that they pay, is not uncommon. Among youth and university students, when they get together to eat out, paying for oneself is common but sometimes one person would pay the bill and then others would pay them their portion.

Entertainment

Entertainment choices in Lebanon are virtually endless during the day and at night. The country's nature and history offer everyone something to do whether it is strolling by the beach, driving on the curvy mountain roads, exploring the historic ruins or walking in the different neighborhoods of certain areas and enjoying a cup of coffee at one of the many sidewalk cafés. Cinemas, shopping malls, theaters and museums are a few of the many available choices. Nightlife in major cities boasts many options from clubs to bars, restaurants offering live music to concerts and world-class festivals. Casino du Liban is open for 20 hours each day and has a dress code and different schedules for the various gambling and game rooms.

International music festivals from all genres such as ballet, orchestral concerts, pop music and opera performances featuring world-famous artists performing in English, French or Arabic among other languages are of world-class quality.

Media

The Lebanese media landscape is as pluralistic in every sense of the word, just as every other aspect of Lebanese cultures is. Beirut, Lebanon's capital, is historically known to be a space for free media outlets and freedom of expression. Prior to the 1975 civil war, Lebanon's written media outlets were the space for political and ideological wars, not only for the Lebanese but also for many other Arab regimes and their oppositions who financially supported their media allies; but free pluralistic written media also existed and flourished during the Civil War itself. But starting with the second decade of the 21st Century, written media outlets suffered greatly. Many prestigious newspapers shut down while others continue to struggle financially, and some switched to venture into the online world. Most media outlets in Lebanon belong to, or are supported in one way or another, by the country's political elites and reflect the political divisions that still dominate the country.

The culture in Lebanon encourages fast adoption of new trends. Media Landscapes reports more than 81% (5.5 million residents) of the population to be internet users. Social media is popular with Facebook being most used platform followed by WhatsApp. In 2019, widespread demonstrations against the government erupted in the country following the announcement of the minister of Information his intent to tax WhatsApp calls to the equivalent of 6 dollars per month. The tax was never imposed however the demonstrations continued and became known as the "October 19 revolution". Some in the country claim that the WhatsApp tax was just a superficial cause of the civil demonstrations and that the whole situation was plotted because of political reasons. The demonstrations were quickly politicized, and most people continued to be divided based on their sect-political affiliations.

Note: For detailed information about media in Lebanon we recommend visiting Media Landscapes.org.

THE OFFICIAL HOLIDAYS AND MEMORIALS IN LEBANON

DATE	HOLLIDAY OF MEMORIAL DAY	DAYS OFF
Jan 01	New Years Day	One day
Jan 06	Christmas Day-Armenian Orthodox	One Day
Feb 09	St. Maroun Day	One Day
Feb 14	Rafiq Hariri Memorial Day	
March 25	Annunciation	
May 01	Labor Day	
Variable dates	Good Friday (Western Churches)	
Variable dates	Easter Western Churches	
Variable dates	Good Friday Eastern Churches	
Variable dates	Easter Eastern Churches	
Variable dates	Eid Al-Fitr (Ramadan)	Multiple days
May 25	South Liberation Day	
Variable dates	Eid Al-Adha	Multiple days
Variable dates	Hijri New Year	
Variable dates	Ashoura	Commemorated by Shia' Muslims
Variable dates	Prophet Mohammad's Birtday	
November 22	Independenace Day	
December 25	Christmas	

Sports

Most known sports are practiced and played in Lebanon. Lebanese have not lost their zeal and passion for sports and other outdoor activities despite the instability that has reigned the country for nearly half a century. The mild climate that dominates both the coastal and mountainous regions allows outdoor sports to take place year-round. As a matter of fact, it would be totally feasible to ski in the morning and swim at the beach on the same day due to the country's small size!

Football (soccer) was the most popular sport in Lebanon until the 90s. In fact, football was so popular that even during the years of the civil war, when popular teams such as Brazil, Germany, England and France were playing in World Cup matches, militias would cease fire to watch these games and resume fighting after the matches end. At such times, small televisions running on 12-volt car batteries propped up on idle tanks and inside their bunkers were a common sight. Also, many parties and families opted not to seek shelter during bombing, just to watch football games. The 1990s witnessed a rise in popularity of basketball as private sector sponsored different teams. Basketball became the most popular sports then and local teams attracted and invested in international players including a few NBA players; Lebanese teams were able to compete in and win multiple basketball championships at international level. In February 2022 the Lebanese team won the Arab Nations Basketball Championship.

The sectarian nature of the country was also reflected in sports as different teams in soccer or basketball became the sport-face of sects. For example, soccer clubs *Nijmeh* and *Ansar* are viewed as representatives of the Sunnis and *Safa* soccer club as a Druz club while *Homentmen* as Christian Armenian. In basketball *Alhikmah* club (Sagesse) was viewed as a Christian club while *Alriyade* (Sporting) was a Sunni club.

Most school grounds, public parks, and public beaches have football (soccer), basketball, and volleyballs fields/courts while tennis, golf, snow and water skiing and boarding, scuba diving, and horseback riding are generally concentrated among the nation's elite/privileged class and immigrants who return to visit Lebanon from time to time and can afford the exorbitant rates to engage in such sports at private facilities. Hiking and exploring cultural and natural sites is an option for nature lovers.

Displacement and Migration

Some schools in Lebanon teach young students that the first Lebanese immigrant was Antonio (aka Antonius) Bishallany, a Maronite Christian, who immigrated to the United States in1854.The historic reality is actually far from this, immigration from Lebanon must have started back in the days of the Phoenicians who lived in Lebanon from 1550 BC to 300 BC, and who had built their reputation for their commercial sailing and travel skills. It is widely known that Elissar (Elissa), the princess who established the famous city of Carthage, immigrated with a number of her followers from the shores of Tyre in southern Lebanon. Her success in becoming a queen and ruling many other cities in what became modern day Tunisia is a testimony for the success of Lebanese immigrants wherever they go.

Heavy immigration and migration are a characteristic of the Lebanese. Its causes are a combination of economic, political and social factors. While official numbers are at best estimates, it is a fact that studying Lebanese immigration was a topic of interest to scholars starting in the early 1900s. For example, as early as 1923, Hitti [34] provided a historical summary of the social, economic, and geographical characteristics of "Syria and Syrians", as all who emigrated from the Levant, were referred to at that time. Then, Hitti1 provided an estimated number of those immigrants and their offspring to be about 200,000, most of whom were Christians.

Scholars talk about four waves from the Levant towards the United States [24]. However, immigration destinations out of Lebanon include more than the United States. Discussing immigration waves from Lebanon post 1975 in particular, is complex and complicated due to the absence of accurate statistics and demographic information [36]. However, it is confirmed that major immigration waves out of the country happened post 1975. Alattat[25] estimates that 25% of the Lebanese population immigrated out of the country between 1975 and 2003. The last major immigration wave happened in 2021 when the Lebanese economy crashed and Lebanon faced unprecedented crises at all levels. Immigration destinations out of Lebanon include the Arab Gulf countries, Europe, Australia, North and South America and Africa.

Internal displacement of Lebanese happened during the years of the civil war (1975-1990) and led to a sectarian demographic redistribution of the population. Efforts to relocate people back to their towns and villages started after 1990, but these efforts are not fully completed.

here are so many Lebanese emigrants that the Lebanese cabinet in charge of the country's foreign affairs is actually called "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants." The country's sizable community living abroad have long played a critical role in sustaining Lebanon's internal economy.

Animals in the House

Many people have the stereotyped image that all Muslims do not allow dogs inside their homes. Anyone visiting Lebanon and getting to know its culture would know that this is not the stand of "all Muslims". Pets such as cats, dogs and birds have been historically common inside Lebanese households of various religious backgrounds. However, one may also find that some more conservative Muslims, just as some Christians and Druz among those of other religious backgrounds, may not allow dogs inside their homes and may have them in the house's garden if they have one. In some areas in Beirut, such as Ras Beirut, breeding pigeons at roof tops and having *kashat hamam*, a flight of pigeons, was common and those flights could be seen flying in the sky around their rooftop with their owner waving a flag to direct them and call them back to their cages after they roam the neighborhood sky.

Martyers Square 1982 Israeli Invasion

Wars in Lebanon could be a topic for a series of books. We invite our readers to read the following resources if they are interested in the history of wars in Lebanon and to do further research on their own.

Haugbolle Sune: Historiography and memory of the Lebanese Civil War 1975-1990

Animals in daily language

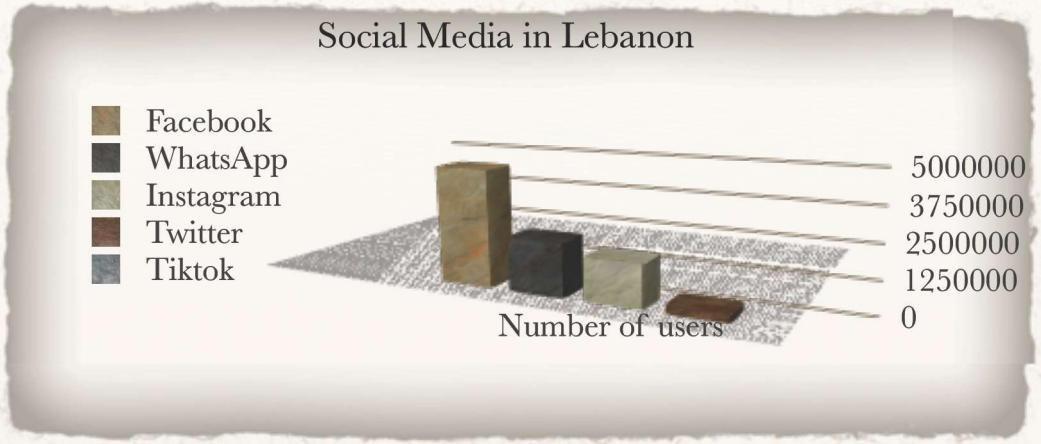
In George Orwell's novel Animal Farm, the pig Napoleon changes the seventh commandments to one that reads, "All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others." Had Orwell visited Lebanon, he would have known that in the Lebanese narrative, animals are not and were never equal. In daily Lebanese speech, references to animals are common. Describing other individuals and calling them by certain animals is used either to praise or to insult. Saying that someone is like a horse is acceptable and considered as praise while calling someone a donkey is an insult. Sometimes, even parents insult their kids by calling them *ibn* or *bint kalb* or *ibn* or *bint kalba*, meaning son or daughter of a male dog or a female dog. Some animals are almost exclusively used for certain genders. For example, calling a female hayya (snake) or bouma (owl) is always insulting as the first means that she is cunning and treacherous and the later means that she brings bad luck. Males, on the other hand, may even refer to themselves or others saying: "like a horse" to say that they are well and healthy while saying that they are a donkey means that they are stupid, naif, or were taken advantage of. Animals that connotate praise include horse, gazel, tiger, lion and eagle. Animals that connotate insults include donkey, mule, bull, cow, dog, cat, snake, owl, betel, rat, cockroach, male or female goat, pig, coyote, fox, mongoose, lizard, raven and bear, to name a few. Meanwhile, calling someone a beast or a monkey may have either a praising or insulting connotation depending on the context in which the usage occurs.

Perceptions of the West

Kul she franje brenje is a Lebanese idiom that means "all that is foreign is good". This reflects the Lebanese view of the West in particular but not of "all foreign" countries. In Lebanon, like many other places around the globe, there seems to be a culture of hierarchy where Westerners from Europe, the US, Canada and Australia are viewed with utmost respect and looked up to. However, people, migrant workers, and products imported from other nations (such as developing countries or others that were part of the former Communist block) are not as brenje (good). Back in the late 1990s when one of the authors of this chapter was attending an event at a hotel in South Lebanon, he was surprised

when one of the hotel's employees, who was from Ghana, started crying because the author and his colleagues were holding a conversation with this employee at the reception desk. When asked about the reason he was emotional, the employee said: "this is the first time someone holds a conversation with me and treats me like a human being; most residents either avoid dealing with me or treat me like a slave who should only receive orders and obey". While this may not reflect the attitude of every Lebanese, the contrast of maltreatment and good treatment of domestic migrant workers of certain nationalities is well documented in Carol Mansour's documentary Maid in Lebanon 1 and 2

Lebanese are also divided in their attitudes toward Western politics with sides switching alliances as the political scene changes. This was historically the case since the establishment of Lebanon as an independent political entity.



Arabic Standard Time: Another Paradox

The time-culture in Lebanon follows a contextual polychronic time orientation. When it comes to business and work, most people are relatively prompt and arrive on time, or almost on time, especially in the private sector. However, social events run on what some people jokingly call "Arabic Standard Time". In such a context, time is a suggestion rather than a fixed period. At weddings, parties, lunch and dinner invitations people are traditionally late to an extent that among Lebanese as saying that is common if you want your event to start at seven, for example, say it is at six. People usually do not want to be the first of those arriving and it is common for people to arrive an hour late, or more, to events that are expected to last for multiple hours.

Not-Fun Facts about Lebanon

1- On May 6, 1916 Jamal Pasha (Turkish General) executed the highest number of Arab activists in Beirut, Lebanon most of which were journalists and writers.
2- On December 28,1968 Israeli commandos destroyed the Lebanese Civil airline fleet that belonged to Middle East Airlines (MEA), Lebanese International Airways (LIA) and Trans Mediterranean Airways (TMA) at Beirut International Airport.
3- Lebanon has a civil war that officially lasted for 15 years (1975-1990). Some consider it still ongoing since 1975.
4- Parliament elections were not held after 1972 until 1992.
5- The result of the 15-year war was more than 130 thousand deaths, 300,000 injured, and displaced almost one million people (25% of the population) in addition to a large number of missing people. The war also resulted in the destruction of Beirut's downtown and business district and a sectarian demographic distribution of the population except Ras Beirut area that remained the most diverse area religiously, economically and politically.
6- Sabra and Shatila massacre 1982
7- Qana massacre 1996
8- Females are still unable to give their children Lebanese citizenship.
9- Beirut witnessed on August 4, 2020 an explosion of ammonium nitrates that were stored at the Port of Beirut. The explosion results in more than 12,000 casualties and far above the officially reported data (Lancet , 2021)
10- In 2021 the rate of the U.S. dollar towards the Lebanese Lira increased more than ten times causing unprecedented hyperinflation and economic stress.

LEGENDRY LEBANESE POETS, MUSICIANS &SINGERS

POETS	COMPOSERS	SINGERS
Said Akl	Rahbani Brothers	Fairuz
Maroun Karam	Zaki Nassif	Sabah
Talal Haydar	Ziad Rahbani	Wadie Assafi
Omar Azzaani	Milhim Barakat	Nasri Shams Addin

Top 12 Tourist Sites

The Cedars of Lebanon

1 of 12

Suggested sites to visit

It is very hard to pick only 12 sites to name in Lebanon, everywhere in the country offers something to its visitors. Here are some common places:
1. Cedars; 2. Jeita Caves;
3. Tripoli; 4. Byblos;
5. Jounia; 6. Rouche;
7. Down Town Beirut;
8. Baalbak; 9. Anjar;
10. Saida; 11. Tyre;
12. Zahle.

Typical Expressions of Condolences in Lebanon

Allah yaazeicom (May God give you comfort) (All religions)
Taaazeina alhara (our warm condolences) (All religions)
Allah yerhamou/yerhamha (May God have mercy on him/her) (All religions)
Yejaal mathwah/mathwaha aljanna (may he/she be in paradise) (Muslims)
Azzam allah Ajracom (May God plenfully rewards you) (Muslims)

Image 1.2 Cemeteries of different religious groups in Lebanon

France's Protestant Cemetery in Beirut

In My Own Words

The following voices are the true and authentic opinions of the indviauls' named about the culture/s of Lebanon.These opinions do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the authors of this book or its publisher.

Nina Nassif

My Father is Syrian, and my mother is Lebanese. I was born in Syria but my family went back to Lebanon immediately after my birth. Before I moved to Ohio, U.S.A in 2016, we lived in Syria from 2003 till 2011, and then in Lebanon from 2011 till 2016. To me, Lebanese culture is a mix of a variety of ancient groups; traditions and customs that came all together on the Lebanese land as history wrote itself, resulting in the modernized, culture enriched present Lebanon.

Two beautiful traits that I love about Lebanese culture are: people of different backgrounds coexisting or living together and that in villages people share celebrations and sorrows together. In addition, I love the cultural trait of hospitality. Lebanese people give care, food, home, warmth, and love to any guest that stays at their home for as short as a day or for as long as the guest stays. Nevertheless, there are two characteristics in the culture that I do not enjoy. Those are: sectarianism and no privacy. When I was there, I encountered as much as 10 keen sects with different teachings and beliefs in one tiny village. As for the nonexistent privacy, I have witnessed how different families in the village will all talk, give opinions, and participate in personal issues of other family members or even neighbors and friends.

Youmna Karim

I was born in Lebanon to Lebanese Shia parents and moved to the US when I was two years old. In 2006, my parents decided that they wanted their children to grow up back home in order to be closer to our roots and culture. We lived in Lebanon from 2006 to 2013. Living in Lebanon from the age of 12 to 19 had a significant influence on who I am today. The religious and political sectarianism was very evident. It was easy to become a victim to it. I made sure to stay as far as I can from individuals who were trying to negatively influence me and ingrain their sectarianism in me. I chose to be a part of a diverse social circle. I chose to not focus on the negative and instead embrace the hospitality, friendliness, and generosity of the Lebanese society. I fell in love with Lebanon, the culture, and the people. Unfortunately, I witnessed the 2006 war and countless other horrific incidents that took place in those few years. One aspect that truly shocked me about the Lebanese society was that they are able to look past calamities. They learn to get back up stronger and live their lives to the fullest despite the uncertainty and lack of security. This may be due to the hardships that every Lebanese generation has faced, however, it is a coping mechanism that is much needed in such parts of the world.

Wissam Eljaouhari

I was born in Venezuela to a Lebanese Druze family. Our social circle involved individuals from different backgrounds, ethnicities, and religions. We grew up quite secular and religion was not brought up much at home. My family moved back to Lebanon in 2009 and I enrolled in a University in Beirut, before transferring to the States. The sectarian nature of the country created a visible divide among the students and teachers on campus. This brought to my attention the fact that the Druze, a minority in Lebanon, have a few distinct characteristics that make them stand out from the other religions. They dress and behave like secular citizens, meaning they do not visit a place of worship weekly or partake in religious rituals such as praying or fasting. They believe in reincarnation and claim to know individuals who have reincarnated. Most are very proud of their religion. However, only a small percentage of the Druze community truly understands the religion and practices it. Conversion into the religion is not allowed and the religion forbids exogamy. Out of the many things that are forbidden, most Druze tend to only abide by that one commandment which forbids exogamy. Many times, families disown their children for marrying outside of the religion. In my opinion, this may be a result of cultural pressure and norms that have stuck around for hundreds of years. This is probably the aspect that I tend to disagree with the most, the disowning of children and siblings for their choice of marriage. On the other hand, I truly enjoy the collectivistic nature that is present in the community. It truly makes one feel right at home.

Aphrodite Bassil

I am a native of Smar Jbeil, North Lebanon. I grew up in war-torn Beirut, in an out of shelters. In the year 2000, I left for Dubai to fulfill my childhood dream of flying the world as a flight attendant. In late 2009, I felt extremely homesick and decided it's time to come home… I was called crazy, after all, who would want to live in such an unstable Middle Eastern country! Well, I would! Lebanon for me is a mix of warmth, generosity, hospitality, collectivism, and beloved traditions that only Lebanese understand and cherish. Although Lebanon remains mainly conservative and attached to its traditions, Occidental influences are felt almost everywhere such as in the dress code, the love of fashion, cinema, theatre, art, way of life, and even the language.

Due to our diverse society, Lebanese adapt well anywhere in the world, a trait I highly admire. In my long years of travel, I have rarely witnessed friendlier people than the Lebanese, opening their hearts and homes to foreigners, expressing their hospitality through food, coffee, and home-made delicacies.

However, Lebanon still has a long way to go to overcome sectarianism, racism, and its patriarchal society. Unfortunately, women and minorities still suffer from gender inequality and injustice.

The previous 2 years (2020-2022) have taken their toll on the population, bouncing between a collapsed economy, a global pandemic and a blast that destroyed the capital, leaving behind deep material and mental damage. Nevertheless, Lebanese once more showed their resilience and solidarity, standing for each other in unprecedented ways! This is the Lebanon I adore, my home, my people, and hope for better days to come.

A Day in my life (potential box describing the life of a native living in Lebanon. Not confirmed yet. Will be decided on later dependent on the space and size)

Lebanese Culture in Movies Suggested Movies

- Caramel
- Little Wars
- Maid in Lebanon 1 and 2
- The Insult
- West Beirut
- Where to Now
- Zafafian

Suggested Works of Literarture

- The Prophet (Gibran Khalil Gibran)
- A House of Many Mansions (K. Saliba)
- Writing Beirut (Samira Aghacy)
- The Rock of Tanios (Amin Maalouf)
- Gate of the Sun: Bab Al-Shams (Elias Khoury)
- The Stone of Laughter (Hoda Barakat)

Post Reasing Self Assessment

Question 1 of 20

Which of the following groups are officially recognized religious groups/sects in Lebanon

- ○ **A.** Muslims, Christians, Yezidis and Druze
- ✓ **B.** Maronites, Sunnis, Jewish and Druze
- ○ **C.** Assyrians, Mormons, Shia and Jewish
- ○ **D.** Copts, Druze, Protestants and Baha'is

◀ Check Answer ▶

Time line of major events in Lebanon's modern history

Time-Line of Significant Events

(Can be formatted differently later)

- 1920- League of Nations mandate Lebanon to be under French rule
- 1920- Declaration of Greater Lebanon with Beirut its capital
- 1926- Declaration of the Lebanese Republic and creation of a Lebanese constitution (but still under French authority)
- 1943- Lebanese Independence from the French
- 1948- Establishment of Israel and Palestinian refugees influx to Lebanon and establishment of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon
- 1958- Internal conflict between the Lebanese and American troops land in Beirut
- 1967- War between Israel on one side and Syria, Egypt and Jordan on the other
- 1969- The "Cairo Agreement" limiting the Palestinians freedom of military resistance operations against Israel from one area in southern Lebanon.
- 1970- Palestinian troops deported from Jordan to Lebanon
- 1975- Lebanese civil war known as the 2-year War which lasted for 15 years.
- 1975- Syrian troops enter Lebanon to aid Christian militias
- 1975- Political and Demographic Division - Capital divided into East and West
- 1982- Israel invades Lebanon reaching and occupying Beirut
- 1982- Palestinian troops deported from Lebanon to other Arab countries in north Africa. Syrian troops withdraw their forces to Al Bekaa valley.
- 1982- Sabra and Shatila massacre
- 1987- Syrian troops re-enter Beirut and other areas to bring an end to internal flights between leftist militia
- 1989-1990 The Taief agreement ending the civil war on paper
- 1990s rebuilding downtown Beirut
- 1996- Israel partially invades Lebanon and commit Qana massacre
- 2000- Israel withdraw from most of southern Lebanon
- 2005- a series of assassinations starting with that of the Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Al Hariri followed by a number of other politicians and journalists
- 2005- Syrian troops withdraw from Lebanon
- 2006- The July War- Israel invades southern Lebanon and destroys all Lebanese bridges and infrastructure and levels the southern suburb of Beirut which was the main headquarter of Hezbollah.
- 2008- The Doha agreement calms hostilities among political parties in Lebanon.
- 2009 to 2020- Multiple political crises
- 2020- The Beirut Port Explosion
- 2021- Collapse of the Lebanese Lira value against the U.S. dollars and multiple crises in availability of the daily life necessities

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